

研究ノート

Education for All: The Role of Higher Education and Universities

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Note : This paper was largely quoted from the following documents :

1. "Priorities and Prospects for a Lifelong Society increasing Diversification and Sophistication", 1997, Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture
2. "Remaking Universities continuing Reform of Higher Education", 1996, Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture

I. Accessibility of Higher Education of Japanese Adults

According to a report entitled "Comprehensive Study on Educational Planing of Lifelong Learning Society" conducted by National Institute for Educational Research, in response to the question "what subjects did you learn most eagerly?" Based upon levels of learning, the answers were as follows: at the beginner's level 22%, at a slightly more advanced level 27%, at an even higher academic level 17%, unable to judge 24%. From this it can be said that a variety of programs cover the beginners' Level through higher academic levels.

The ratio of Japanese people who in 1997 graduated from high school was 97% and from Junior College or University was 39%. These ratio have increased more than past years.

There has been a steady increase in the learning activities of the Japanese people.

Moreover, survey results confirm that once people commence structured, ongoing learning, they become increasingly determined to advance to a higher level and thus tend to continue their learning activities.

A basic characteristic of learning is that the longer people are involved, the more they wish to advance and expand their learning activities. Furthermore, the more deeply involved in learning people become, the more eager they are to utilize their learning achievements. These tendencies have the effect of encouraging more learning.

In addition, involvement in learning activities is seen as learning to interaction with a wider range of people, which tends to stimulate interest in a broader spectrum of fields. A number of factors, including the efforts of institutions of higher education to cater to the general adult population and the development of multimedia, the reflected in the diversification of learning methods. One result of this process is the perception that opportunities for structured, specialized learning are more easily accessible. This perception is helping to increase people's motivation to learn. The types of learning activities associated with the concept of lifelong learning tend to be those that give added meaning to people's lives, such as hobbies and general cultivation. These are expected to remain popular as Japan evolves into a mature society. There is also considerable activity in work-related learning. Clearly there will be strong demand for this type of learning in the future, as well.

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Current trends, notably the aging of society and the shift to an information-oriented society, have created new learning priorities, including priorities for work-related learning. As is apparent from the 1992 report of the Lifelong Learning Council, for example, there is considerable variety in past learning activities and aspirations for the future. It is necessary to facilitate learning that reflects these priorities by adopting a comprehensive approach, including the promotion of awareness and the provision of learning opportunities.

II. Present Situation of Universities in Japan

(1) Universities

Japanese universities are classified into three categories depending on their administration: national, local public and private. They are founded in accordance with the unified established standard, therefore, the standard of education is of the same level. The number of total universities and college is 552 of which 98 are national, 48 are local public, and 406 are private. About half of these universities have graduate schools, and some of them have research institutes or other research facilities attached. The total number of university enrollments is 2,481,810 students (as of 1st May, 1994).

National universities are situated throughout the country, one or more in each prefecture. Local public and private universities are also located throughout the country. According to the geographical distribution, many universities specialize in meeting the industrial and traditional needs of the localities.

(2) Graduate schools

Master's and Doctor's Courses

The graduate school has a master's course for 2 years, and a doctor's course for 3 years which follows the master's. For medical science, dentistry and veterinary medicine, however, there is no master's but only the doctor's course of 4 years.

(3) Kenkyu-sei etc. (Non-degree Students)

Degree students and non-degree students are enrolled in the graduate school. The requirement for enrollment for non-degree students is the same as for other regular students. These non-degree students are usually called Kenkyu-sei (research students). Monbusho Scholarship Students will at first be enrolled as these non-degree students. However, the enrollment does not automatically qualify to proceed into the graduate program. In order to get a master's or doctor's degree, student must be admitted formally as a degree student by passing the entrance examination.

Not only for older adults, but also for almost all Japanese people, to enter a university is not easy. Because of severe entrance examination system in Japan, a surprising number of high school graduates spend one or more years just preparing for the next year's exam. To enter a national university, a student needs to take two

exams, the government-sponsored entrance examination, and the exam designed.

A study conducted in Japan in 1987 (Nishide, 1990) found that only 2.7% of 626 department in 248 Universities had special admission policies for older adults. And as a consequence, merely 10 people 55+ were admitted as regular students to the sample universities in the year. However, the study also reported most universities accepted auditors (not always willingly though) and many offered university extension courses. In 1987, the universities offered at least total 724 extension courses, and about 10,000 of their 140,967 participants were 55 or older. Some courses are subsidized by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Morooka, 1989), and a broad range of topics are covered.

III. Present Situation of Higher Education and Adults

It is necessary to provide diverse and comprehensive learning opportunities to meet today's learning needs. On April 24, 1996, the Lifelong Learning Council presented recommendations concerning agencies providing individual learning opportunities in a report titled "Measures to Improve Lifelong Learning Opportunities in the Community."

The main measures in this area are likely to be as follows.

(1) Institutions of Higher Education

It is necessary to provide diverse and comprehensive learning opportunities to meet today's learning needs. Providers of learning include schools, social education facilities, sports and cultural facilities, and various other institutions and organizations.

Approaches to the provision of learning activities must be broad enough to encompass this diversity. In addition to the development of comprehensive plans, it is necessary to build systems that allow wide-ranging cooperation, including links among various government departments and agencies. On April 24, 1996, the Lifelong Learning Council presented recommendations concerning agencies providing individual learning opportunities in a report titled "Measures to Improve Lifelong Learning Opportunities in the Community."

The main measures in this area are likely to be as follows.

The public's growing demand for lifelong learning has created a need for advanced

structured, specialized learning opportunities. Institutions of higher education, including the University of the Air, have an important role to play in meeting this need.

1) Universities, junior colleges, and other institutions

Universities, junior colleges, and other institutions of higher education are working to improve adult access by introducing special selection systems for adults, evening graduate schools, special register systems, programs for special non-degree students, and systems for transfer admission to universities.

There has been a steady increase in the number of people studying under these systems. The number of universities accepting special register students at the undergraduate level rose from 116 in 1992 to 358 in 1994. There was also a dramatic increase in the number of students accepted on this basis, from 2,119 in 1992 to 10,056 in 1994. It is hoped that use of these systems will continue to expand.

2) The University of the Air

The University of the Air can make an especially important contribution as an institution of higher education that is accessible to all, with no limits on time and location.

The University of the Air was created to bring higher education to the wider public through radio and television broadcasting and is regarded as a core component of lifelong learning systems. In line with its goals, the University of the Air does not select entrants by means of examinations. Its students are divided, according to their learning format, into (a) Regular students, whose goal is graduation; (b) one-year non-degree students, who enroll for one year and cover a group of subjects relating to a specific study theme; and (c) one-semester non-degree students, who enroll for one term to study a selected subject.

The University of the Air is a nonprofit, educational organization established in 1985, modeling after the Open University in the United Kingdom. It can be explained as a correspondence course using TV and radio. Residents of Kanto area (the vicinity of Tokyo) can audit video lectures broadcasted on a special channel at their homes. Local students usually need to go to regional Study Centers, or utilize satellite system at home. Any person with high school diploma can enroll this university for a BA degree(it's a real university) or for non-degree. Several major areas are available.

The number of students who were enrolled in the University on Air were 656,730 of which males were 45% and females were 55%. As for age groups, the twenties were 27%, the thirties 23%, the forties 20%, the fifties 12%, and over sixty was 11%.

Student preferences by majors at the University on Air are as follows: Development and Education 26%, Life and Welfare 23%, Human study 19%, Society and Economy 13%, Industry and Technique 10%, Understanding Nature 10%. As for their academic backgrounds, high school graduates are 41%, junior college, university and graduate school 28%, elementary and junior high 2%.

IV. Difficulties to Access of Higher Education

Learning opportunities provided by educational institutions of higher education tend to be concentrated in the institutions' immediate geographical area. As a result there are regional disparities in access to learning opportunities. This problem is not limited to institutions of higher education but characterizes all kinds of structured, ongoing learning at advanced levels.

One solution to this regional disparity in access is the speedy expansion of the University of Air to provide nation-wide coverage. There have also been moves to use satellite communications to enable adult students to take university courses in the workplace and elsewhere. These efforts should be continued and expanded. In fiscal 1996 MESSC (Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture) initiated the Project to Promote the Development of Advanced Learning System for Citizens' Public Halls. Through the Use of Communications Satellites. This project is now studying the possibility of using satellites to transmit extension course programs from universities and other institutions of higher education to citizens' public halls. Participation in structured, ongoing learning activities at institutions of higher education requires a certain continuous period of time; financial resources are also an important consideration.

According to the 1996 MESSC survey, the majority of people studying at such institutions found tuition fees and other costs a burden. The percentages of people citing lack of time owing to work or inadequate financial resources as reasons for not advancing to higher levels of learning were far higher among those studying at graduate schools, universities, and special training colleges than among those using

other learning methods.

The most frequent response given when respondents were asked to indicate the most essential requirement for continuing with their present method of learning or advancing to a higher level was “access to courses at lower cost.” This response was chosen by 19.5% of respondents at the graduate school level, 26.7% of those at the university level, and 26.9% of those studying at special training colleges. “Financial support from employer” was the third most popular response at the graduate level (10.5%) and accounted for 6.1% of responses from people studying at universities. A similar pattern emerged in responses to this question from the time perspective. At the graduate level, for example, 9.1% of respondents cited “opportunities to learn at convenient time,” while “adjustment of working hours to allow learning activities” attracted 7.7% of responses and “paid leave for learning activities” 7.1%. These figures were higher than those for other learning methods.

A similar trend was seen emerged among people studying at universities. This tendency was confirmed by the results of the MESSC survey on refresher education. Employers were asked to list the systems that they considered most desirable from the viewpoint of sending technical and research personnel to study as full-time students at universities and other institutions of higher education.

The leading response courses” (30.4%), “shorter courses” (29.2%), and “longer courses” (24.1%) from the time perspective. One solution to the problem of cost is improvement of scholarship systems. The problem of time can be overcome by further efforts to establish day/evening programs and evening graduate schools and through efforts to provide learning opportunities in ways that facilitate participation, such as the implementation of short-term intensive programs.

3) Job Skill Development

The Ministry of Labor’s “Survey on Private-Sector Education and Training” yields similar findings in regard to the problems encountered by people wishing to engage in structured, ongoing learning at advanced levels. When participants in the February 1994 survey were asked to cite barriers to self-improvement activities, 59.9% stated they had “no time” and 32.2% that such activities were “too expensive”. Employees’ main expectation of employers was “financial assistance with course fees and other costs” (37.5%). In the February 1993 survey the most frequent response (39.2%) when employers were asked to cite problems with education and training by outside

education and training agencies was “too expensive”.

To promote adult learning activities it is necessary not only to improve the acceptance systems of institutions of higher education but also to deal with the issues discussed above. In view of the fact that learning activities are commonly motivated by work-related factors, the provision of support to learners, either by employers or through government job skill development systems, is essential.

The Ministry of Labor has recognized this need by including a policy calling for the promotion of skill development in the Sixth Basic Plan for Human Resources Development, under the heading “Utilizing the Individuality of Workers in Job Skill Development Activities.” The plan specifies a number of concrete measures for this purpose. First, there will be strong encouragement of the introduction of paid education leave systems by corporations, and companies will be encouraged to establish systems, such as long-term leave, that enable employees to take leave for self-motivated job skill development activities. Second, efforts will be made to foster appropriate social trends and educate employers and other relevant groups so that working hours can be adjusted and facilities and systems for job skill development can be improved. Third, studies will be carried out concerning measures to provide direct support to a wide spectrum of individual workers in order to promote job skill development activities based on individual initiatives. Measures to improve support, including direct support to individuals, for job skill development activities based on individual initiatives are also seen as important from the perspective of supporting adult learning activities as a whole.

V. The Role of Institutions of Higher Education

In addition to emphasizing contemporary issues the Lifelong Learning Education Council recognized, the acquisition of work-related knowledge and skills is an extremely important learning priority for contemporary society which is experiencing rapid change in the types of knowledge required. Structured, ongoing learning activities are essential in this area, and in many cases the levels of learning required are very advanced. In future the need for structured, ongoing learning is expected to expand to include not only work-related fields but also such areas as hobbies and general cultivation. Institutions of higher education are therefore likely to become the

focus of rising expectations.

According to the 1996 MESSC survey, for example, the priority for most people studying at institutions of higher education under adult admission, special register student, or special non-degree student systems is the acquisition of work-related knowledge and skills. The survey results also show that most of these people are eager to continue their studies at institutions of higher education and advance to higher levels.

The analysis of worker training and education and self-improvement activities reveals that institutions of higher education are used relatively little for these purposes. This does not necessarily mean that there is little need for such institutions in this area. In February 1994 MESSC surveyed the personnel and education departments of corporations about interaction between industry and universities and other institutions of higher education in the field of refresher education. Of the companies surveyed, 10.4% predicted that the number of technical and research personnel sent to Japanese universities and other institutions of higher education would increase, while 62.0% thought the number would increase under certain conditions.

In the 1996 MESSC survey, greater access to universities and junior colleges was the condition cited by many participants in extension courses (30.5%) as a condition for continuing to more advanced levels of learning. This response also aimed relatively high scores among people already enrolled in graduate schools (8.5%) and universities (13.9%).

The facts that people already studying at institutions of higher education want them to be more open and that the majority of people studying there want to continue their studies suggest that institutions of higher education are the focus of great expectations among people involved in learning activities. These expectations are likely to intensify as such institutions become more open to the community.

Institutions of higher education have already made some efforts in response to these expectations. More and more people are studying at such institutions. As pointed out in the 1996 report of the Lifelong Learning Council, however, even in universities that

welcome adult students efforts are frequently limited to only a few staff members, while the attitudes of the teaching staff as a whole remain unchanged. Thus it is necessary to improve universities' internal organizational structures and modify staff attitudes.

The priorities for institutions of higher education as they endeavor to foster closer links with the community and contribute to community development include the improvement of internal organizational structures, the development of systems for coordination and cooperation with local industry and government agencies, and the creation of systems enabling them to actively seek the views of the wider community when accepting adult students. The creation of such systems is facilitated by the Recurrent Education Promotion Program, which was initiated in fiscal 1991, and by various measures to encourage refresher education. Efforts are needed to ensure that achievements in these areas are fully utilized great expectations among people involved in learning activities. These expectations are likely to intensify as such institutions become more open to the community.